

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 IO-14 DRC-01 /116 W
----- 027439

R 261610Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3827

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENNA 8297

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PGOV, AU

SUBJECT: LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN SLOVENE MINORITY
ISSUE IN AUSTRIA

REF: VIENNA A-267 OF MAY 31, 1974

1. SUMMARY: SLOVENE MINORITY ISSUE, UNRESOLVED AND ON BACK BURNER IN RECENT MONTHS, SUDDENLY TOOK ON NEW URGENCY IN WAKE OF PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT SEP. 24 OF SLOVENE MINORITY LEADERSHIP WITHDRAWAL FROM FURTHER TALKS WITH AUSTRIAN GOVERNMENT AND OF REPORTED STRONG YUGOSLAV DEMARCHE ON SAME DAY TO GOA ON CONTROVERSY. THESE TWO MOVES WERE PRECIPITATED BY RECENT AGREEMENT AMONG AUSTRIA'S THREE POLITICAL PARTIES IN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY THAT AS PRECONDITION TO EXTENSION OF FULL MINORITY RIGHTS TO SLOVENES IN CARINTHIA, ESPECIALLY REGARDING ERECTION OF BILINGUAL ROAD SIGNS, CENSUS OF A SPECIAL NATURE (NOT FURTHER EXPLAINED) WOULD BE NECESSARY. LOW KEY INITIAL GOA REACTION TO SLOVENE COUNTERMOVES AIMED AT KEEPING ISSUE FROM GETTING OUT OF HAND AS WAS CASE IN FALL 1972. AT SAME TIME GOA APPEARS STILL DETERMINED TO TRY OVERCOME FEARS OF
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SLOVENE MINORITY AND ITS YUGOSLAV SUPPORTERS CONCERNING

DESIRABILITY OF SUGGESTED CENSUS. END SUMMARY

2. SLOVENE MINORITY LEADERS IN CARINTHIA ANNOUNCED SEP. 24 THEIR DECISION TO SUSPEND FURTHER TALKS WITH MEMBERS OF AUSTRIAN FEDERAL AND CARINTHIAN PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF PARLIAMENTARY PARTIES ON EFFECTUATING FULL EXERCISE OF MINORITY RIGHTS BY SLOVENES. DECISION BY SLOVENE REPRESENTATIVES EXPLAINED AS BASED ON CONCLUSION THAT IN VIEW OF PAST EXPERIENCES AND ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF MINORITY CENSUS PROJECT, "PREREQUISITES FOR FURTHER COOPERATION IN CONTACT COMMITTEE NO LONGER EXIST".

3. IN APPARENT COORDINATED MOVE, YUGOSLAV MFA CALLED IN AUSTRIAN AMBASSADOR IN BELGRADE SEP. 24, ACCORDING TO AUSTRIAN PRESS, TO REGISTER STRONG PROTEST AGAINST PROPOSAL TO CARRY OUT SLOVENE MINORITY CENSUS IN CARINTHIA. AUSTRIAN AMBASSADOR WAS INFORMED THAT MINORITY CENSUS, IF ATTEMPTED, WOULD CONFLICT WITH SPIRIT OF AUSTRIAN STATE TREATY (ARTICLE 7) SINCE TREATY OBLIGATES AUSTRIA TO EXTEND TO SLOVENE AND CROAT GROUPS FULL MINORITY RIGHTS, REGARDLESS OF THEIR NUMERICAL STRENGTH. GOY DEMARCHE REPORTEDLY ALSO NOTED THAT ANY AUSTRIAN GOVERNMENT DECISION TO UNDERTAKE SUCH CENSUS WOULD "NOT CONTRIBUTE TO STRENGTHENING CONFIDENCE BETWEEN YUGOSLAV AND AUSTRIAN PEOPLES."

4. VIENNA PRESS SEP. 26 NOTED AUSTRIAN FONMIN BIELKA AND YUGOSLAV FONMIN MINIC, IN MEETING IN NEW YORK SEP. 24, ALSO DISCUSSED MINORITY ISSUE. MINIC REPORTEDLY DID NOT MAKE FORMAL PROTEST BUT SAID THAT AUSTRIA'S FULFILLMENT OF CERTAIN OBLIGATIONS RESULTING FROM STATE TREATY AND OTHER AGREEMENTS WAS CONSIDERED OVERDUE BY YUGOSLAVIA. CHANCELLOR KREISKY'S OFFICE, IN LOW KEY REACTION TO YUGOSLAV COMPLAINTS, ASSERTED SEP. 25 THAT YUGOSLAVIA HAD OBVIOUSLY MISUNDERSTOOD REASONS FOR ENVISAGED MINORITY CENSUS SINCE CENSUS WOULD IN FACT BE "INSTRUMENT FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF MEASURES SERVING INTERESTS OF SLOVENES."

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COMMENT: MAIN PARTIES TO CONTROVERSY SEEM TO HAVE ADOPTED IRRECONCILABLE POSITIONS FOR AND AGAINST SPECIAL CENSUS. ACTION OF AUSTRIAN SLOVENES AND THEIR SUPPORTERS WILL PROBABLY FORCE GOA TO MAKE EARLY ATTEMPT AT SOLUTION OF ISSUE RATHER THAN, AS HAD HERETOFORE BEEN EXPECTED, TRY TO MANAGE ISSUE UNTIL AFTER JUNE 1975 NATIONAL ELECTIONS. INITIAL GOA REACTION TO LATEST DEVELOPMENTS ON ISSUE DESIGNED

TO PREVENT PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS, ALTHOUGH THIS MAY NOT BE POSSIBLE SINCE SLOVENE MINORITY LEADERSHIP HAS ANNOUNCED PUBLIC RALLY OCT 6 IN SUPPORT THEIR OPPOSITION TO CENSUS AND AUSTRO-GERMAN NATIONALISTS CAN BE EXPECTED TO EXPRESS PUBLICLY THEIR FEELINGS ON OCT. 10, ANNIVERSARY OF POST WORLD WAR I PLEBISCITE IN SOUTHERN CARINTHIA. FONOFF SOURCES HAVE PRIVATELY EXPRESSED TO EMBASSY THEIR CONCERN OVER MOST RECENT TURN OF EVENTS AND ARE URGING GOVERNMENT TO MAKE MAXIMUM EFFORT TO REALIZE SOLUTION TO ISSUE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, IN VIEW OF UNCERTAINTY OVER FUTURE COURSE OF DEVELOPMENTS IN YUGOSLAVIA FOLLOWING TITO'S DEATH. HUMES

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, MINORITIES, NATIONALISTS, CENTRAL GOVERNMENT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 SEP 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974VIENNA08297
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740272-0305
From: VIENNA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t1974099/aaaaahwu.tel
Line Count: 128
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: VIENNA A-267 OF MAY 31, 1974
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25 MAR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <25 MAR 2002 by elyme>; APPROVED <21 MAY 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN SLOVENE MINORITY ISSUE IN AUSTRIA
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PGOV, AU
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005